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THE PRONUNCIATION OF
EWE

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The Pronunciation of EWE

BY

J. BERRY, B.A.

(Lecturer in West African Languages, University of London)

Illustrated by two gramophone records made by Lily G. Baeta

Ewe, the language of a million people, is spoken in the extreme south-eastern corner of the Gold Coast and in the British and French Mandated Territories of Togoland. It has a considerable School and Church Literature, and its importance for the Gold Coast administrator, missionary or trader, is second only to Twi.

This pamphlet, like others in the series, is designed for the European learner who wishes to acquire from the beginning an adequate pronunciation. Ewe is not an easy language; tone and "strange" consonants demand of the beginner considerable concentration and effort.¹

In the following pages he will find the main features of Ewe speech described and its difficulties set out for him. Two gramophone records accompany the text, and these should be used for practice in hearing and reproducing the sounds.

The material of the records is:

- Record I (Part 1) Vowels, semi-vowels and diphthongs.
- „ I („ 2) Consonants and tones.
- „ II („ 1) Sentences and greetings.
- „ II („ 2) A story.

Groups of examples spoken on the records are marked by a star (★) in the margin of the text. The complete text of record I will be found in the Appendix.

The words are recorded leaving time for the repetition of each word. It is useful to listen for some time before beginning to imitate. After this, the student should repeat many times until the exact pronunciation of the sounds can be reproduced without difficulty. It is useful to reverse the order, i.e. student to read each word from the text before playing the record. Finally,

¹ He will find that a knowledge of the general principles of phonetics is helpful here. This pamphlet might well be read in conjunction with Westermann and Ward's *Practical Phonetics for Students of African Languages*, Oxford University Press, 1933, 2nd and revised edition, 1949.

let him practise saying the words without the record. This is a help towards developing a memory for the sounds and tones of the language as well as a means of building up a vocabulary.

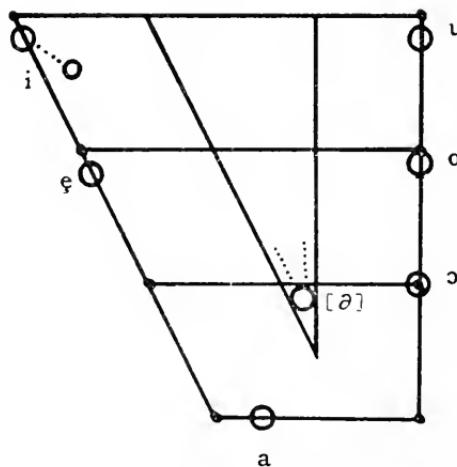
Note.—Ewe has several dialects; some with considerable differences in pronunciation. Miss Lily G. Baeta, who collaborated in the preparation of this pamphlet, is a native of Keta and speaks the Aŋlo dialect of Ewe as her mother tongue. This is the dialect now most favoured for literary purposes. It has the added merit of being intelligible throughout Ewe-speaking areas.

The examples recorded are taken from Miss Baeta's speech and are spoken by her; they are all commonly to be found in modern colloquial Aŋlo.

Ewe Vowels.

Note.—The lip positions are in each case normal for the type of vowel, viz.:

- i spread
- e spread and slightly more open than i
- ə and a neutrally open
- ɔ open rounded
- o more closely rounded than ɔ
- u very closely rounded



- Cardinal vowels
- Ewe vowels

Ewe has a simple vowel system. There are seven significant vowels. They are:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i	e	a	ɔ	ɔ	o	u

Their lip and tongue positions are set out on p. 2.

The sounds themselves are relatively easy to acquire. There is, however, one difficulty of an orthographic nature.

The present spelling is inconsistent in its representation of the two Anglo sounds here written e and ɔ. The student is advised first to learn to pronounce and to distinguish these two vowels in the examples given on the two accompanying gramophone records, and then to read the brief observations set out below as a guide to usage.

NOTE ON e AND ɔ.

Vowel No. 2 e occurs:

(1) In certain adverbs and adjectives, particularly diminutives; it may then be represented in the standard orthography, either by the letter ε or the letter e or even ee, e.g.:

løboε [--]	<i>narrow and oblong</i>
gbadze [--]	<i>small and flat</i>
sesiε [---]	<i>strongly</i>
fafε [--]	<i>cold</i>
or	
fafee	

(2) In certain contracted forms with verbs (see page 7, vowel combinations, and page 9, elision of vowels); it is then written e.¹

e.g.	meyie [__]	<i>but I went</i>
	tsie [__]	<i>it is water</i>
or	tsi ye [__]	
	kœ	<i>lift it</i> , pronounced kœ [↖]
	tae	<i>draw it</i> , pronounced tee [↖]

¹ Except in the words **ne** [↖], *to him* (from **na**, *give*)
 (tsɔ) . . . **ve** [↖], *bring it*.

(3) In a few nouns, it is then written either ε or e indiscriminately, more commonly the latter.

he [↗] knife pe [↗] chisel
but afəbide [__-] toe kpakpaxe [__-] duck

(4) This sound does not occur in stems.

Vowel No. 4 (ð) is always written e and presents no difficulty. In the early stages when learning vocabulary and reading texts it might be well if the student were to make (e) with a diacritic (e.g. ɛ) when the sound of vowel No. 2 is represented. This is done in the following pages, viz. from now on, vowel No. 2 is represented here either by ε, if it is so spelt in the current literature, or by ɛ (i.e. with the diacritic) if the orthography has e.

e.g. he [↗] knife but afəbide [__-] toe

The Vowels described.

i is a close vowel near to Cardinal No. 1. A more open variety of i is frequently heard in closed syllables (cf. kiniti, below).

★ vi [↗] child
afí [__] mouse
kiniti [__-] nim tree

ɛ/ɛ is somewhat lower than Cardinal No. 2. It is near the first element of a typical English diphthong, e.g. (as in day).

pe [↗] chisel togɛ [-] ear ring
kpakpaxe [__-] duck

e (phonetically ə) is a central vowel very near the so-called "neutral" vowel used in English in unstressed position (sofa, around).

ne [__] coconut
ame [__] person
fefe [__] play

This vowel occurs:

(i) As a prefix:

eve [__] two
etso [__] to-morrow or yesterday
egbe [__] to-day

(2) As the second and third persons singular pronominal prefixes:

eyi [-_]	<i>he went</i>
èva [-_]	<i>you have come</i>
elolo [-__]	<i>it's big</i>

a is a front vowel near to Cardinal No. 4, rather like the first element of the typical English diphthong *aj* in, for example, *pie*. Beginners tend to confuse this sound and the central vowel (e). Certainly, in quick speech, the two can sound very much alike.

ga [__]	<i>money or metal</i>
aka [_-]	<i>coal</i>
papa [_/_]	<i>fan</i>

a occurs as a prefix:

★	ame [__]	<i>person</i>
	ati [_-]	<i>tree</i>
	alē [-_]	<i>sheep</i>

a and e contrasted:

★	ka [__]	<i>thread, string</i>	ke [-]	<i>sand</i>
	nya [__]	<i>word</i>	nye [-]	<i>gum</i>
	gadaka [_-__]	<i>iron box</i>	ga ðeke o [-__-__]	<i>no money</i>

ɔ is near to Cardinal No. 5. It resembles in quality the English sound in *ball* (bɔ:l) rather than that in *not*.

★	mo [-]	<i>road</i>
	avɔ [_/_]	<i>cloth</i>
	abɔbɔ [_-__]	<i>snail</i>

o is a half close rounded vowel, about Cardinal No. 7. It resembles the French o in *beau*. English speakers tend to diphthongise this vowel when it is long (i.e. they say *ow* as in *boat*) and when it is short, to substitute for it a short u (English *put*). These faults may be avoided:

- (1) By taking care not to move tongue or lips during the articulation of the vowel;
- (2) By trying to make a lower and retracted type of u with lips well rounded.

mo [__]	<i>face</i>
ako [-_]	<i>parrot</i>
fofo [-_]	<i>father</i>

ɔ and o contrasted:

to [ɔ]	<i>mountain</i>	to [ɔ]	<i>father</i>
So [ɔ]	<i>God of thunder</i>	so [ɔ]	<i>horse</i>
ago [ɔ]	<i>velvet</i>	ago [ɔ]	<i>type of fruit</i>

u is a close rounded vowel, Cardinal No. 8.

nu [u]	<i>thing</i>	mu [u]	<i>mosquito</i>	avu [u/ʌ]	<i>dog</i>
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Nasalization of Vowels.

With the exception of vowel No. 2,¹ all vowels may be nasalized. In the orthography they are marked with the tilde.

fi [i]	<i>to blow the nose</i>	vɔ [ɔ/ʌ]	<i>evil</i>
alẽ [ɛ]	<i>sheep</i>	gõ [ɔ]	<i>to walk briskly</i>
afã [ã]	<i>half</i>	lũ [u]	<i>to shave</i>

Nasality may be significant as the following pairs of words show:

★ akpa [a]	<i>a part, or side</i>	akpã [a]	<i>a type of food, pudding</i>
lo [ɔ]	<i>crocodile</i>	lõ [ɔ]	<i>to last</i>
efii [ɛ]	<i>he stole it</i>	efiõ [ɔ]	<i>he blew his nose</i>
atõ [ã]	<i>guinea-worm</i>	atõ [ã]	<i>five</i>

It must be remembered there are degrees of nasality. In the neighbourhood of nasal consonants vowels are all partially nasalized: for example, the vowels in *nye* [ɛ], *gum*, and *mu* [u], *mosquito*, are slightly nasal (cf. the nasal twang of the English vowel a in *man*), but in *nyẽ*, *to sneeze*, *mũ*, *to upset*, the nasalization is much stronger; in the first case the nasalization is, as it were, dependent (and therefore need not be noted), in the second it is independent and is an essential feature of the word.

Vowel Length.

All vowels are found short and long. Long vowels occur only in adverbs and adjectives.²

¹ This may be nasalized when long. *lẽẽ* [-], *bridge*. In some cases the dictionary wrongly has ē for the nasal counterpart of vowel No. 5, writing for example *alẽ* (*sheep*) for *alẽ* (above).

² Long vowels do not occur in verb or noun stems. They do, of course, in certain inflected forms, e.g. the noun with its article, *dadaa* [-], *the mother*, and the habitual tense of the verb, *metaaa nu* [-], *I draw*.

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★ mii [_]	<i>continuously</i>	fiī [~]	<i>word of protestation or assertion</i>
kōtēç [--]	<i>clearly</i>	sēë [~]	<i>for a while</i>
baa [~]	<i>naturally</i>	fāä [_]	<i>freely</i>
ləbəç [__]	<i>big and long</i>	vɔɔ [~]	<i>well</i>
lubuu [__]	<i>stupid</i>	fūū [~]	<i>much</i>

What are phonetically long vowels also occur in contractions of the verb and its object (third person singular pronoun).

kee, *open it*, is pronounced kii []

lie, *cut it up*, is pronounced flii []

Although it is only necessary to distinguish the two vowel lengths, long and short, the student will easily recognise a third, viz. half-long. This would appear to depend on tone and is heard:

(i) In monosyllabic nouns of mid tone:

(2) In syllables with tonal movement (i.e. with rising or falling tones):

avu [ʌvʌ] dog qbɔ̄ [q̄bɔ̄] goat adaka [ādak̄a] goat

These vowels are written short.

Diphthongs and Combinations of Vowels.

Nearly all possible combinations of vowels occur as diphthongs. A few are given below:

★ tia [t̪iə]	<i>to choose</i>	adəkoe [ədəkəʊ]	<i>oyster</i>
fie [f̪iə]	<i>tiger nut</i>	bua [-]	<i>to pretend</i>
abui [əb̪uɪ]	<i>needle</i>	ao [əʊ]	<i>no</i>
akol̪e [əkɒl̪e]	<i>a nap</i>	fiə [-]	<i>evening</i>
		gōe [-]	<i>protruding</i>

Diphthongs also occur:

(i) When the verb is followed by the third person object pronoun.

miae, *squeeze it*, is pronounced mie [m̩_i_]

enoē, he drank it, is pronounced enūi

equie, he ate it, is pronounced *equi* [-]

(2) When adjectives are formed from the verb.¹

qidiqie [---] *Slippery* is formed from the verb qidi
 kokoë, *holy*, is formed from ko and is pronounced
 kokoë [---]
 vevië, *dishevelled*, is formed from vë and is pronounced
 vevië [---]
 miamië, *tight*, is formed from mia and is pronounced
 miamië [---]

(3) When "diminutives" are formed from other adjectives.

goe, *a round calabash*, is formed from go and is pronounced güi [✓]
 lóbœ, *long and cylindrical*, is formed from lóbœ and is pronounced lóböë [---]

(4) Combinations of vowel with a occur in the habitual form of the verb, e.g.:

metsia dzi [_ - /]	<i>I get impatient</i>
eđea ame ² [- ___]	<i>he saves people</i>
etœa nu [- ---]	<i>he sews</i>
ekoä nu [- --]	<i>he laughs a lot</i>
ebua ame [- ___]	<i>he is respectful</i>

Similarly the noun with its article:

atia [_ --]	<i>the tree</i>
amea [___]	<i>the man</i>
atötœa [_ ---]	<i>the pineapple</i>
akoä [- --]	<i>the parrot</i>
dua [_ -]	<i>the town</i>
hea [_ -]	<i>the knife</i>

¹ In two cases this results in the formation of a triphthong, i.e. with

(a) verbs ending in u: **kukuie**, *lifeless*, is formed from **ku** and is pronounced **kuküie** [---];

(b) verbs ending in o: **fofuië**, *scoured*, is formed from **fo** and is pronounced **fofuië** [---].

² Tends to become **edäame** in quick speech.

Vowel Elision and Contraction.

In connected speech elision or contraction of vowels frequently takes place. A few examples are given below. The student is advised to consult Westermann¹ for a fuller statement.

e is always elided after e, o and o.

- ★ ede (e)tso [⁻__] *he arrived yesterday*
 edtsø (e)ve [⁻-_] *he took two*
 edo (e)ve [⁻-_] *he put on two*

a is always elided after a and o.

- ★ eða (a)zi [⁻-_] *it laid an egg*
 eko (a)zð [⁻--] *it is high now*

When a and e come together in the sentence, one of three things may occur.

- ★ (i) e may be elided. el(e) afi [⁻_＼], *he is here* (verb + noun).
 (ii) a may be elided. ale (a)me [⁻--], *that kind of person* (noun + noun).
 (iii) The two vowels may be contracted into (e:).
 ★ bae, *cheat him*, becomes bɛ̄e [__]
 nae², *give it him*, becomes nɛ̄e [＼]
 fafae, *cold* (from fa), becomes fafɛ̄e [⁻__]

Semi Vowels.

y requires little comment. With some speakers it is weak and tends to be dropped intervocally.

- ★ yi [__] *cutlass* yevu [⁻-] *European*
 aboyome [__⁻-] *prisoner of war*

w occurs before back vowels only. It is well rounded and often fairly long. It tends to be weak and like y, in certain cases, practically disappears, e.g. awu sounds like au [__].

- ★ wo [__] *flour or powder* ewo [__⁻] *ten*
 awu [____] *dress*

¹ "A Study of the Ewe Language". O.U.P., 1930.

² Is written in this case nɛ.

The Consonants.

Ewe has a difficult consonant system. The slight differences in pronunciation between an Ewe consonant and a rather similar sound in English may have great importance. This is so in the case of *f*, *v*, *d* and *h*. The student should read carefully the notes set out below where these sounds are described in detail and in the early stages be constantly on guard against carrying over into Ewe the speech habits of his mother tongue.

- (1) The voiceless plosives **p**, **t**, **k** are aspirated. The aspiration is more noticeable before back vowels; before front, it is very slight, particularly with **t** and **k**.
- (2) **p** occurs chiefly in loan words and is statistically rare.

★ **pɛpi** [˘-] *harmattan*
 apaka [˘--] *hammock*

t, like **d** below is dental (i.e. made with the tip of the tongue on the teeth).

★ **ati** [˘-] *tree* **atɔtɔ** [˘--] *pineapple*
 te [˘] *yam* **to** [˘-] *ear*
 tata [˘-] *photograph* **tu** [˘] *gun*

k is as in English.

b and **g** call for no comment.

d is best treated in relation to **ɖ**.

The actual articulation of these consonants is not very difficult to acquire once the salient features are recognised. They are summarised below.

d is a voiced dental plosive, i.e. articulated with the tip of the tongue against the back of the teeth. It is very like the English **d** in *width*.

ɖ is a voiced alveolar plosive articulated with the tip of the tongue against the alveolar arch. The point of contact is somewhat retracted as compared with the normal (i.e. English) **d**. It is for this reason, probably, that it has been called the "retroflex **ɖ**". It may be helpful to set out certain other incidental differences in the articulation of these two sounds.

(1) The *articulator*, i.e. the tongue, is relatively flat and spread in making d. (Notice how the sides touch the inner sides of the upper teeth during the occlusion.) In pronouncing q, the tongue is somewhat contracted, i.e. there is a slight grooving of the blade such as occurs in the formation of the "hushing" fricatives.¹

(2) The *release* of the d stop is sharp, that of q slow, i.e. in making d the tongue is withdrawn sharply and cleanly from the point of articulation and the following (vowel) sound may begin simultaneously with the release of the occlusion (cf. the articulation of plosives in French); in making q the tongue is withdrawn somewhat slowly from the point of articulation, and a momentary constriction is formed between the occlusion and the complete release. This results in slight affrication heard in different degrees before different vowels. It is clearest before open vowels and, for example, qa often sounds rather like d'a. Finally, the degrees of *tension* vary considerably between the two sounds. d is pronounced with strong force and noticeably greater tension of the muscles in the articulating organs.

Examples.

adika [__-] enmity	adiba [__-] pawpaw
adelā [__-] hunter	deka [__-] one
dada [__-] mother	aqaka [__-] box
doku [__-] turkey	adɔ [__-] crown of the head
duko [__-] nation	akɔdu [__-] banana
	doovu [/_-]

Some practice also will be required to *hear* the difference between d and q. Compare:

edii [^-~] he looked for it	edii [^-] he buried it
ade [/_] saliva	ade [/_] tongue
da [__] bow	da [__] hair
do [__] illness	do [/_] net
do [/_] hole	do [__] cloth
du [__] town	du [__] gun-powder

¹ The groove, of course, is much less in the case of q.

Note.—Only the voiced dental plosive occurs in combination with **r**, e.g.:

drō [‿] *cupboard* dra [↗] *a rascal*

kp, **gb** are the usual labiovelar consonants. In articulating these sounds two stops are made simultaneously. The back of the tongue touches the soft palate as for **k** or **g** and the lips are touching for the **p** or **b** stop. They are most difficult to hear in initial position. The student might best begin his practice in words such as:

akpe and akpakpa

Where the on-glide from the vowel makes it easier to hear the **k**. In repeating, care must be taken that the two articulations are simultaneous. The on-glide to the **k** must not be heard before the lips come together for the **p** position, i.e. it must be **a-kpe** not **ak-pe**. In the same way, the two stops must be released simultaneously.

akpe [‿]	<i>thank you</i>	gbe [‿]	<i>voice</i>
akpakpa [‿-]	<i>dove</i>	agba [‿-]	<i>load</i>
kpo [‿]	<i>fence</i>	gbō [↗]	<i>goat</i>
kpo [‿]	<i>oven</i>	agbo [↗]	<i>gate</i>

ts, **dz** are affricates. Most commonly they are dental, i.e. as in English *hats* and the Italian *mezzo*. These sounds do not occur initially in English and so may present some difficulty to the student. They are easily to be acquired by repeating an English sentence, such as *the hats are (on the table)*, trying to divide the words *the ha-tsare*, then saying *tsare* without *the ha*. The resulting sound will approximate to the Ewe **tsa**, *to wander*.

★	tsa [‿]	<i>to wander</i>	dze [‿]	<i>salt</i>
	tso [‿]	<i>to cut</i>	dza [‿]	<i>to fall (of rain)</i>
	tsu [‿]	<i>madness</i>	dzo [‿]	<i>fire</i>
	tse [‿]	<i>to bear fruit</i>	dzu [‿]	<i>to insult</i>

In an alternative pronunciation, some modern Ayo speakers use the palato-alveolar affricates **tʃ**, **dʒ** described below.¹

¹ Thus midʒo [‿-] or midzo, *let's go*.

eva etʃo [‿-‿] or eva etso, *he came yesterday*.

tʃ, dʒ. These are near the sounds in English *church* and *judge*, but pronounced with the lips well spread. They occur in Ewe:

(1) Most commonly before the close vowel i, and are then written **ts, dz.**¹

★	tsi [__]	water	dzi [__]	heart
	tsikpe [--]	hailstone	dziehe [--]	North

(2) Less frequently before other vowels: the orthography usually has **tsy.**²

★	tsyɔ [__]	to strain
	tsyɔ [__]	canine tooth
	tsyɔ [__]	funeral

m, n need no description.

ny is a palatal nasal, and is one sound, cf. French gn in *Boulogne*. The English sound in *news* (n + y) is not acceptable to Ewe ears.

★	nyi [__]	cow	nye [__]	gum	nya [__]	word
---	----------	-----	----------	-----	----------	------

ŋ is a velar nasal, the sound in English *sing*. Unlike English, Ewe frequently begins words with this sound. If the student finds difficulty in pronouncing **ŋ** initially in the word it might be helpful, as was suggested in the case of **ts, dz**, to practise saying sentences such as *bring all*, trying to divide the words *bri-ŋall*, then saying *ŋall* without the *bri-*.

★	ŋe [__]	to break	★ ŋɔgbɑ [---]	leaf
	ŋɔti [--]	nose		
	ŋuti [__]	skin		
	fofɔŋ [__]	sugar cane		

¹ Cf. Westermann, op. cit.,

s, z, ts and **dz** are said to be palatalized before i, but **tʃ** occurs before other vowels in a number of words.

'atʃatʃa [__], *plaited mat*; atʃɔ [__], *finery*.

Similarly, **s, z** occur before i in, for example, zi [__], *pipe*.

² In some types of Ewe speech a pronounced y-glide is heard with this sound, **atʃɔ** for example, sounds very like **atʃi**.

Some adverbs and adjectives end in a lengthened velar nasal; these are, however, written with one **ŋ** only.

sɔŋ(ŋ) [‿] *of the same kind*
taŋ(ŋ) [‿] *full*

ŋ occurs as a nasal prefix. It may then be syllabic and have its own tone.

★ **ŋdi** [-] *morning* **ŋgo** [-] *forehead*

1 is the normal clear 1 used in English before vowels, and needs little comment.

lili [‿‿]	<i>to surprise</i>	lo [‿]	<i>crocodile</i>
lala [‿‿]	<i>to wait</i>	lu [-]	<i>guinea corn</i>
lo [‿]	<i>to collect</i>		

Note, however, 1 before nasal vowels is strongly nasalized.

alē [-]	<i>sheep</i>
lā [‿]	<i>meat</i>
lɔ [‿]	<i>to love or to agree</i>

l not only initiates stems, but occurs as the second element in certain consonant combinations. It does not follow alveolar or palatal consonants.

aflagba [‿-]	<i>woven mat</i>	hlɔ [‿]	<i>clan</i>
		gleti [-]	<i>moon</i>

r is usually a voiced alveolar fricative. It does not begin stems and occurs only when an alveolar or palatal consonant precedes (cf. 1).

tre [↗]	<i>calabash</i>	tsranuī [‿]	<i>sieve</i>
dzre [‿]	<i>quarrel</i>	yayra [‿]	<i>blessing</i>

f, v need no comment. It is important to distinguish them from their bilabial counterparts.

f, v are bilabial fricatives: in pronouncing, the upper lip is brought down to meet the lower lip and the breath is expelled through the narrow opening thus formed, to make a fricative sound. The teeth do not enter into the articulation. The lips are not rounded (they are as in the position for the "neutral" vowel) and the whole articulation is lax.

f, *v* contrasted with *f*, *v*.

<i>fā</i> [_]	<i>yeast</i>	<i>fā</i> [_]	<i>puff adder</i>
<i>fu</i> [_]	<i>bone</i>	<i>fu</i> [_]	<i>feather</i>
<i>vo</i> [_]	<i>python</i>	<i>vo</i> [_]	<i>to finish</i>
<i>vu</i> [_]	<i>blood</i>	<i>vu</i> [_]	<i>to tear apart</i>

s and *z* are as in English. They are said to be palatalized before *i*,¹ when they are the palato-alveolar fricatives *ʃ* and *ʒ*, the sounds in English *ship* and *measure* (but pronounced with the lips well spread).

★	<i>asi</i> [_ _]	<i>hand</i>	<i>sisiblisi</i> [_ _ _ -]	<i>bear</i>
	<i>azi</i> [_ _ /]	<i>egg</i>	<i>zitola</i> [_ _ -]	<i>agitator</i>

ɣ is a voiced velar¹ fricative, i.e. the back of the tongue is raised until it is near the velum or soft palate, and the air escapes through the narrowed passage making a fricative sound. In the case of the Ewe *ɣ*, the friction is slight and the whole articulation weak.

★	<i>ɣi</i> [_]	<i>harmattan</i>	<i>ɣe</i> [_]	<i>sun</i>	<i>ɣayla</i> [_ -]	<i>secrecy</i>
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x is the voiceless counterpart of *ɣ*.² *h* is a pharyngal fricative with voice, i.e. voiced *h*. Some English speakers (particularly men) pronounce intervocalic *h* in this manner. It is heard, for example, in words like *perhaps*.

★	<i>xexi</i> [_ -]	<i>umbrella</i>	<i>ha</i> [_]	<i>song</i>
	<i>xa</i> [_ -]	<i>broom</i>	<i>aho</i> [_ -]	<i>widow</i>
	<i>xo</i> [_]	<i>house</i>	<i>ahū</i> [_ /]	<i>dew</i>

Disappearance of Consonants.

The following examples illustrate in modern colloquial Ewe the weakening and dropping of certain consonants and syllables. They are only given to draw attention to this feature, a comprehensive statement is outside the scope of this pamphlet.

¹ There are exceptions, notably *zi* [/], *pipe*, and *ʃ* and *ʒ* are also found in a few words before other vowels; for example, *ʃa*, *to dry* (written *sia*); *ʒo*, *to lean against* (written *zio*).

² Alternatively, it might be considered as an *h* with more than normal friction. There is relatively little scrape, particularly before back vowels.

sika fe dada [- -- -] > sikaada [- - -] *Sika's mother*
 gbe ka gbe [- / -] > gbeagbe [- \ -] *what date?*
 fifi laa [- - -] > fia [- -] *immediately or just now*
 ati la [- -- -] > atia [- - -] *the tree*
 mele yiyi ge [- - - -] > meyi ge [- - -] *I shall be going*
 ele nu fiam nye hā [- - - -] > enu fiamem hā [- - - - \ -] *he is teaching me too*

Tone.

Ewe is a tone language, i.e. every syllable in the language has as an integral part of its formation a musical pitch or tone, carried usually by the vowel or a sonant.¹ This pitch is not absolute but relative to the pitch of other syllables in a given utterance. In Ewe it is necessary to distinguish three such levels of tone, viz. a syllable may be said to be of low tone [-] **kɔ**, *neck*; **ge**, *beard*; of a tone higher than low but lower than that of certain other syllables in the language (i.e. mid tone),² [-] **nu**, *mouth*; **ta**, *head*; or the syllable may be said to have high tone. This feature of tone is most frequently significant and distinguishes meaning as the following pairs of words will show.

		High Tone	Low Tone
★	kpo	oven	walking stick
	to	ear	buffalo
	tɔ	father	river

In addition to level pitches described above, there are found syllables with a pitch movement up or down.

(i) Rising tone; rises from low to mid or higher, the distinction is unimportant.

★	gbɔ [/]	goat	avu [- /]	dog
	(ii)	Falling tone: is commonly a fall from high to mid,		
★	tɛʃ [\]	aunt	adaka [- \]	box

dziya [- \] rain squall

¹ In Ewe **m**, **ŋ** are sonants.

ele yiyim [- - - -], *he is going* ŋku [- -], *eye*

² It is often difficult to distinguish a mid tone from a high or low tone when it occurs on a monosyllable pronounced in isolation; on the other hand it is easily recognisable when it occurs near other tones, more especially when it occurs after a high tone.

occasionally a fall to low:

koklo [-\] *chicken* **feſle** [-\] *naked*

A few words have a combination tone, e.g.:

★ **drɔ̄** [/\], *cupboard*, which is rising-falling.

The tone patterns of words of more than one syllable are made up of combinations of these five tones. Examples of nearly all possible patterns may be readily found. The following illustrate the more common types of two-tone interval found in and between Anglo words.¹ The tonal patterns of polysyllabic words are based on combinations of these intervals.

A. Words with syllables of like tone.

(i) [--] High level. The tone of the second syllable is frequently a little lower in pitch than that of the first, but never so as to confuse this interval with high-mid (B (iv)) below.

★ **kutu** *pot* **kuku** *hat*

(ii) [__] Low level. Again the tone of the second syllable may be somewhat lower than that of the first.

★ **baba** *white ant* **afo** *foot*

(iii) [--] Mid level.

★ **kusi** *basket* **kleno** *coward*

B. Words with syllables of different tone.

(i) [-\] which may be considered low-high or low-mid, the size of interval is not significant, but the first syllable must be completely low (cf. [/\] above).

★ **asi** *hand* **ati** *arrow*

(ii) [-\] Mid-high.²

★ **ala** *raffia* **kese** *monkey*

(i) and (ii) contrasted:

★ **asi** [-\] **ala** [-\]

¹ The tonal relations between words are similar to those between syllables.

² In actual fact the second tone is considerably lower in pitch than a normal high tone. The interval is diminished: about a musical semi-tone.

(iii) [⁻_] High-low or mid-low; again the size of interval is not significant as long as the second is really low (cf. [↖] above).

★ tokpo bucket nake firewood

(iv) [⁻⁻] High-mid.¹ This must be distinguished from high-high (A (i)) and high-low ((iii) below). Cf. [↖] above.

★ legba idol keli light

(iii) and (iv) contrasted:

★ keli [⁻⁻] nake [⁻_]

The importance of tonal accuracy in speaking Ewe has been sufficiently stressed elsewhere. Not only should word and tone be learnt together as vocabulary is acquired, but the student should attempt to master the rules for the many changes of tone that occur when words come together in connected speech. A tonal analysis of Ewe is not possible in this short monograph. All that can be done is to give without comment a few examples of what may be expected.

★ A. tu [⁻] gun but nye tu [⁻↖] my gun
 Kofi [⁻⁻], dada [⁻⁻] mother
 but Kofi dada [⁻⁻⁻] Kofi's mother

★ B. Klu tutu nu [⁻⁻↖⁻] or [⁻⁻↖⁻⁻] Klu did the washing
 but Klu tutu ko [⁻⁻⁻_] Klu washed his neck
 Yao dzo [⁻⁻] Yao goes
 but Klu dzo [⁻⁻] Klu goes

★ C. ame [__] but ame la [__⁻] the man
 nyi [__] but nyi la [__⁻] the corn

It is useful to classify nouns and verbs according to tonal behaviour; compare, for example:

★ D. meva [⁻⁻] I come meyi [___] I go
 (a)ava [↖⁻] it will come (a)ayi [↖_] it will go
 va [↗_] come yi [__] go

¹ Series of descending mid tones are common even in short sentences:
 e.g. kutefa fa [⁻⁻⁻↖_] the funeral place is cold
 nyonuvia yi dua me [⁻⁻⁻↗_] the girl has gone to town

It is perhaps best in the earliest stages to learn words in groups rather than in isolation, as it were. Common greetings and "social formulae" provide excellent material for the beginner. A few such useful sentences are given on Side 1 of Record II¹; they are to be used for practice in hearing and repeating tone groups. They should be thoroughly mastered before going on to the story on Side 2 of the record.

APPENDIX

Text of Gramophone Records

Side 1

1. vi	4. ga
2. afi	5. aka
3. kiniti	6. papa
	7. ame
	8. ati
	9. alẽ
10. ka	11. ke
12. nya	13. nye
14. gaðaka	15. ga ðeke o
16. mo	19. mo
17. abɔbɔ	20. ako
18. avɔ	21. tofo
22. to	23. tɔ
24. so	25. sɔ
26. ago	27. ago
28. fĩ	29. alẽ
30. afã	31. vɔ
32. gõ	33. lũ
34. akpa	35. akpã
36. lo	37. lõ
38. efii	39. efii

¹ See page 22.

40.	mii	41.	fiī		
42.	kɔtɛ̄	43.	sēe		
44.	baa	45.	fāa		
46.	lɔbɔɔ	47.	vɔɔ		
48.	lubuu	49.	fūu		
50.	tia	51.	adɔkoe		
52.	fie	53.	bua		
54.	abui	55.	ao		
56.	akɔlɔ̄e	57.	gōe		
		58.	fīe		
59.	ede (e)tsɔ	62.	eda (a)ʒi	65.	ale ame
60.	etsɔ (e)ve	63.	ekɔ (a)ʒɔ	66.	bae (bɛ̄)
61.	edo (e)ve	64.	el(e) (a)fi	67.	nae (nɛ̄)
		68.	fafɛ̄		
69.	yi				
70.	yevu				
71.	aboyome				
72.	wɔ				
73.	ewo				
74.	awu				

Side 2

1.	pepi	10.	edii
2.	apaka	12.	adɛ
3.	ati	14.	ɖa
4.	te	16.	ɖɔ
5.	tata		
6.	atɔtɔ		
7.	to		
8.	tu		
9.	edii		
11.	ade		
13.	da		
15.	ɖɔ		

17. do	18. dø	
19. du	20. døu	
21. drɔ̄	22. drā	
23. akpe	27. gbe	
24. akpakpa	28. agba	
25. kpo	29. gbɔ̄	
26. kpo	30. agbo	
31. tsa	35. dza	
32. tse	36. dze	
33. tso	37. dzo	
34. tsu	38. du	
39. tsi	41. dzi	
40. tsikpe	42. ziehe	
	43. tsyɔ̄	
	44. tsyø	
	45. tsyɔ̄	
1. nyi	4. ɲdi	8. eva etsɔ̄
2. nye	5. ɲɔti	
3. nya	6. aŋgba	
	7. taŋ	
9. asi	11. aʒi	
10. sisiblisi	12. ʒitɔla	
13. yi	16. xexi	19. ha
14. ye	17. xa	20. aho
15. yayla	18. xo	21. ahu
22. kpo	23. kpo	
24. to	25. to	
26. to	27. to	
28. kutu	29. kuku	
30. baba	31. aʃɔ̄	
32. kusi	33. klɛnɔ̄	
34. gbɔ̄	35. avu	

36. tẹç	37. aðaka
38. dʒiya	
39. drɔ̄	
40. asi	41. ati
42. ala	43. kese
44. asi	45. ala
46. tɔ̄kpo	47. nake
48. legba	49. keli
50. keli	51. nake
52. kutefea fa	
53. nyɔ̄nuvia yi dua me	
54. tu	
55. nye tu	
56. Kofi dada	
57. Klu tutu nu	
58. Klu tutu kɔ̄	
59. Yao dzo	
60. Klu dzo	
61. meva	
62. meyi	
63. ame la	

Side 3

1. Kpoe ḥa dawò dẹ? [⁻⁻⁻] Look here, where's your mother?
2. Edo go [⁻_/] She has gone out.
3. Ne eva la nabe meva dii [⁻⁻⁻⁻⁻⁻⁻] When she comes, tell her I have been here.
4. Medzo [-] I am going away.
5. De afeme nyuie [__⁻⁻] Goodbye.
6. Yoo, mīagava do go [/_⁻⁻⁻] Right, we shall see each other again.
7. Mede kuku mayi [__⁻⁻⁻] Please excuse me.
8. Megbɔ̄na hee [⁻⁻⁻] Just a minute.
Enyo [-] Right.
9. Nukata nèdʒo do? [⁻⁻⁻⁻⁻] Why did you go away?
Èdo dɔ̄medʒui nam [-⁻⁻⁻⁻] You annoyed me.
Nenema? Baba nawò [⁻⁻⁻⁻⁻] Really? I am sorry.
Nyemenya o [⁻⁻⁻] I didn't realise it.

10. **Enyo mesę̄** [̄-̄-̄] It's all right.
11. **Afika yim nèle?** [̄-̄-̄-̄-̄] Where are you going?
Meyina afeme [̄-̄-̄-̄] I am going home.
12. **Dogbe** [̄-̄] Good night.
Dodɔ nentyo [̄-̄-̄-̄] Good night.
Ne ke míakpe [̄-̄-̄] See you to-morrow.
13. **Amekae ma?** [̄-̄-̄-̄] Who's that?
14. **Fofò wòe** [̄-̄-̄] It's your father.
15. **Nya kae dʒɔ?** [̄-̄-̄] What's the matter?
Menye naneke o [̄-̄-̄-̄-̄] It's nothing really.
16. **Nuka dim nèle?** [̄-̄-̄-̄] What are you looking for?
Nye kuku [̄-̄-̄] My hat.
17. **Kukua kę?** [̄-̄-̄-̄-̄] Which one?
18. **Yibootɔ** [̄-̄-̄] The black one.
19. **Èbe aleke?** [̄-̄-̄-̄] What did you say?
20. **Mebe meyi magbɔ** [̄-̄-̄-̄-̄] I said I was going and would
be back soon.
21. **Nàgbɔ kaba** [̄-̄-̄-̄] Don't be long.
22. **De gbo** [̄-̄] Don't be long.

Greetings

- I. A. **Kekea kea?** [̄-̄-̄-̄] How are you?
B. **Ęę héę miawo hā miefɔ?** [̄-̄-̄-̄-̄-̄-̄] Very well,
thank you, and you?
A. **Ęę miefɔ** [̄-̄-̄] Fine, thank you.
B. **Yoo** [̄-̄-̄].
- II. A. **Ddia** [̄-̄] Good morning (or [̄-̄-̄]).
B. **Ddi hee miefɔ nyuiea?** [̄-̄-̄-̄-̄-̄-̄] Good morning, how
do you do?
A. **Ęę, miefɔ** [̄-̄-̄] Very well, thank you.
B. **Yoo** [̄-̄-̄].
- III. A. **Ddɔ** [̄-̄-̄] Good afternoon.
B. **Ddɔ, miefɔ sesiea?** [̄-̄-̄-̄-̄-̄-̄] Good afternoon, how
are you all?
A. **Ęę, miefɔ miawo hā mielia?** [̄-̄-̄-̄-̄-̄-̄] Very well,
and you?
B. **Ęę, míeli** [̄-̄-̄] Very well, thank you.
A. **Yoo** [̄-̄-̄].

IV. A. **Fię** [-] Good evening.
 B. **Fię goo tɔɔ a fewòmea dę?** [-__-__-] Good evening,
 how's your family?
 A. **Edɔ** [-] Quite well.
 B. **Devia wo dę?** [-__-__] The children?
 A. **Woli** [-] They are well.
 B. **Miedɔ nyuiea?** [-__-__] Everybody else?
 A. **Miedɔ** [-] Quite well.
 B. **Yoo** [/_].
 A. **Tɔgbinyea dę?** [-__-__] How's the old man?
 B. **Edɔ** [-] Quite well.
 A. **Vinyeawo kej?** [-__-__] All the children?
 B. **Woli** [-] Quite well.
 A. **Adzo dę?** [-__] And Adzo?
 B. **Ebia wò** [-_] She sends her regards.
 A. **Miedɔ na ma?** [-__-] Everybody else?
 B. **Miedɔ** [-] Quite well.
 A. **Yoo** [/_].

Very Short Informal Welcome Greetings

A. **Tsoo! wòęzɔ** [/_/_] Hallo, welcome!
 B. **Yoo** [/_].
 A. **Mielia?** [__] How are you?
 B. **Ee, mieli** [-_] Very well.

 A. **Dzā, dzā, dzā!** [/_/_/_/_] Welcome.
 B. **Dzā goo, dzā goo** [/_/_/_/_] Thank you.

 A. **Yęyęyę** [__] Welcome.
 B. **Gbogbogbɔ** [__] Thank you.

Story

Side 4

Yiyi kple Kadzidoe

Mise gli loo! Gli neva!
 Listen to a story! Out with it!

Gbe qeka dɔ sesēa de to hee, eye läwo katā kaka henɔ
 Once upon a time there was a great famine and all the animals

nuqudu dim. Yiyi hă nɔ tsatsam zuu keke va ke de
 went off in search of food. The spider too was wandering around

kpea de si to ŋku eve la ŋu. Đedj te eju ale gbegbe
 till he came to a stone that had two eyes. He was extremely tired,

bena deko wòtsyo de atia de si te de kpea ŋu la te.
 so very tired in fact that he simply collapsed under a tree near

Sēe kasia gbemelā eve va le yiyim eye esi woke de
 the stone. A little while later, two animals came passing by, and

kpea ŋu la, qeka gblɔ be, "Oo, menye kpee nye esia?"
 when they reached the stone one of them remarked: "Oh! isn't

Evelia gblɔ bena, "Tsoo eto ŋku!"
 that a stone?" The second one said, "Dear me, with eyes too!"

Wo ame evea katā do gli zi qeka bena, "Kpe to ŋku!" Enumake
 And both cried out together, "A stone with eyes!" Immediately

wodze anyi gbloo heku. Yiyi kpo nusiawo katā eye wòhe läwo
 they fell down dead. The spider saw all this, and quietly took

yi afeme hetṣo kpe la yi da de mo dʒe evea de nu hele egbo.
 the dead animals home. He then carried the stone to a cross-road

Ne lāwo va yina ko la Yiyi nafu du ayi tso
and kept watch. Each time an animal came by, the spider would

wo abia wo be: "Nukae ma le mō ta?"
run up to it and innocently ask: "What's that by the roadside, do

eye ne lāwo gblō be: "Tsoo kpe to nkue,"
you know?" and it would answer, "Goodness, it's a stone with

ko la wotsyo na kploo de Yiyi fe afō nu eye wōhea wo
eyes," and drop down dead at the spider's feet. He would then

sesese yia afeme qana wo kple. Funō
drag it home and cook the meat for his wife and children. As a

kple viawo quna, alebe woawo da ami alesi dʒe le esime lā
result, they were well fed and healthy, whilst all other animals

gedewo qī ku de fu nju.
went without food, and were exceedingly hungry and thin.

Kadʒidōe be de ati me kpo Yiyi fe wɔnawo ken.
The squirrel hid in a tree and saw everything the spider did.

Edi va anyi eye kasia Yiyi kpoe la efu du va yi tui hebia nya
He came down, and immediately the spider caught sight of him,

xoxo lae. Ebiae be: "Nukae
he ran up to him with the old question. He asked: "What's

ma?" Kadʒidœ be: "Nukae ma?" Yiyi gblœ be:
that?" The squirrel said: "What's that?" The spider said:

"Mebe nukae mahā?" Kadʒidœ be: "Mebe nukae mahā?"
"I say, what is that?" The squirrel said: "I say, what is that?"

Yiyi be: "Menye kpea?" Kadʒidœ hā gblœ be:
The spider said: "Isn't it a stone?" The squirrel also said:

"Menye kpea?" Yiyi be: "Kpe nuka?"
"Isn't it a stone?" The spider said: "What stone?" The

Kadʒidœ hā be: "Kpe nuka?" Yiyi be: "Kpe to
squirrel said: "What stone?" The spider said: "A stone

la . . ." Kadʒidœ hā be: "Kpe to la . . ."
with . . ." The squirrel repeated: "A stone with . . ." The

Yiyi be: "Yi edʒie." Kadʒidœ hā be, "Yi edʒie." Dʒi ku
spider said: "Go on!" The squirrel said, "Go on!" The spider

Yiyi eye wògblo be: "Kadʒidœ dʒo movi loo,
became impatient and losing his temper said: "Oh, squirrel, how

kpe to ŋku ya ko nàgblo?" Yiyi mewu nya nu o. Esime wòbe
dreadfully stupid you are: just a simple thing like 'A stone with

"Kpe to ŋku" ko la ye ŋuto hā ɖeko wòmu dʒe anyi hedʒe tsi
eyes' you could have said." He never finished the sentence for,

dʒakaa.

as soon as he said "a stone with eyes," he himself fell down stone

Ba na ame wobana na loo. Yee metsɔ do dʒe afim nyagãa
dead. And so it is that you'll be done by as you did, and it's

dʒe aboda dʒram tsɔ blem nye hã metsɔ ble mi loo.
with this story that the old woman selling boiled corn over there

Yoo dʒe numee wò.
amused me and I pass it on to you. Thank you for a very witty

Yoo dʒe se to gobuie mi.
story. Thank you for listening.





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Berry, Jack
The pronunciation of
Ewe

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